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TRAILS

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY IN THE SPRING, SUMMER, FALL AND WINTER BY THE PEQUOT-SEPOS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, INC., MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT

Vol. VIII

Spring of 1956

Number One

Spring Field Trip Schedule

Following you will find a schedule of the field trips planned for this spring. We have endeavored to include all the necessary details to save the expense of further mailings. This is the only notice you will get so keep it in a prominent place and plan to join us on these trips. All field trips are open to members and their invited friends.

MAY 6—Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary at 7:00 a.m. This will be a bird trip primarily, but Adele Erisman will be along to help us with spring plants. Meet at the parking lot. Coffee and doughnuts for the survivors! Leaders will be Tom McElroy and Adele Erisman.

MAY 13—Mitchell's Woods and Ocean Beach. We will meet at the tennis courts at Mitchell's Woods (Montauk Ave., New London) at 7:00 a.m. This is a good spot for warblers and other land birds. If time permits we will proceed from there to Ocean Beach for shore birds. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard Peterson will lead this trip.

MAY 20—Harkness Memorial State Park. Take Route 1A out of New London to Route 156 heading toward Niantic. Follow Route 156. At the first major crossroad you will find a sign directing you to the Park. You will turn left here. The trip will start from the parking lot at 1:00 p.m. However, why not come early and bring a picnic lunch? Many members are planning to do so. Mr. Paul Waldron will lead this trip.

MAY 27—Barn Island Wildlife Area at 2:00 p.m. Follow U.S. Route 1. Midway between Stonington and Westerly you will see a sign pointing toward the shore that says "Barn Island Wildlife Area." Cross over the bridge and immediately turn right. Follow that road to the very end. We will meet in the parking area next to the shore. The trip will be under the leadership of Mr. William Neiring of Connecticut College.

MAY 31—Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary at 8:30 p.m. This will be a star "trip" under the leadership of the Sanctuary Star Club. Several telescopes will be set up for observation purposes. All members and their friends are invited to attend. In the event of bad weather, the "trip" will be held the following evening, June 1, at the same time. Meet at the parking lot. Mrs. Mary Duryea will be in charge.

Sanctuary to Open Sunday, May 13 for Season

Changes in Board

Of Trustees

At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees, the resignations of two board members were accepted with regret. For reasons of health, Dr. Frederic C. Paffard of Stonington, thought it best that he terminate his membership on the Board. Dr. Paffard is one of the Sanctuary's most ardent supporters. While we all regret losing him as a member of our Board, we know that he will continue to be vitally interested in our program of conservation activities.

Robert B. Chappell, Jr. resigned because of pressing personal business. We are indebted to him for his work with the Screen Tours and membership.

The Board appointed William E. Palmer of Stonington to fulfill one of the vacancies. The other will be filled at our annual meeting in July. Four new trustees will also be elected at this time.

Dr. Richard H. Goodwin of Connecticut College was reappointed to the Board for the year ending June 30, 1956.

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Open House Scheduled From 2:00 Until 5:00 p.m.

The Sanctuary's Trailside Museum, Nature Trail, and demonstration areas will open officially on Sunday, May 13 with a special open house program from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m. Plans are underway to make this a most enjoyable afternoon for all members and their friends.

The Trailside Museum will feature some new and interesting exhibits. For example, more electrical nature games and charts will be added that will challenge the skill of children and adults alike. Other changes in exhibits will be made to give the museum a "new look" for this season.

The Nature Trail will feature more signs and labels designed to give the visitor a more complete ecological story of nature in this area. A continued effort is being made to make this one of the outstanding nature trails to be found anywhere. This is one of the most interesting features of the Sanctuary—one that you will not want to miss. Ample opportunity will be provided to visit the Forestry Area, our new pond, and other conservation projects.

A committee of hostesses will provide refreshments and help make your afternoon more enjoyable. This will be an excellent opportunity to see your Sanctuary, meet other members, and make new friends with mutual interests. Put the date on your calendar now!

IN MEMORY

Since the publication of our last bulletin, the Sanctuary has lost a very dear friend in the death of George B. Utter. "Ben" was one of the Sanctuary's founders and one of its most ardent and faithful supporters. "Ben" was our trailmaster. Each spring he would make sure our trails were perfectly groomed for our official opening. And periodically, throughout the year, he would tour them all making sure everything was as it should be. He was equally enthusiastic about our nature and conservation programs. His sincere devotion will be deeply missed by all.

The Story of a Pond

It seems but a short while ago that the idea on a pond in our low meadowland was only a dream. Actually, the pond is now little more than three years old, but it might be well to pause here and analyze the results of this project. The findings should be of interest in respect to the other water projects described in this bulletin.

The pond moved from the dream stage to one of reality when our membership contributed to a special fund enabling us to pay for the labor involved. Three days work with a bulldozer and the digging part was completed. Through cooperation with a local farmer, the banks were graded, fertilized, and planted. The pond, at last, was a reality.

In the process of digging, the soil was found to be of heavy clay content. Once this clay was pushed up on the banks to dry it appeared white and looked as though it would be most difficult to establish a quick planting that would prevent erosion. However, with the use of well-rotted manure and a mixture of ladano clover, rye, rye grass, timothy, and other grass seeds, a good binding cover was soon established. The pond now appeared the way it had been visualized. The clay bottom and banks proved to be excellent water retainers, even in periods of severe drought.

The pond was planned primarily to attract waterfowl. The edges were kept shallow to permit feeding by dabbling ducks. Some small pond shiners were added hoping to attract some of the fish-eating species that frequent our shorelines. A small island was left in the middle to serve as a loafing area.

As was expected, it wasn't long until the pond proved attractive to black ducks and mallards. These were soon accompanied by wood ducks, some of which stayed and nested in the Sanctuary. Now, it isn't unusual to see as many as 50 ducks on the pond at one time.

This past winter red-breasted mergansers, hooded mergansers, and buffleheads frequented the pond. Species other than ducks have been attracted, too. Great blue herons, night herons, and little green herons find it a perfect feeding place. Sandpipers and yellowlegs have been seen scouring its edges.

Without a doubt this pond has filled the niche in our Sanctuary planning that we hoped it would do. It has proven to be a most successful project no matter how you analyze it. In addition to its wildlife value, the pond has greatly enhanced the appearance of our meadow and has added an additional water supply for protective purposes. In view of this success, the plans advanced elsewhere in this bulletin should prove to be of even greater value.

Our Disappearing Tidal Marshes

(Reprinted from Connecticut Wildlife Conservation Bulletin)

In 1941, the tidal marshes of Connecticut covered approximately 24 square miles; in 1954, only 13 years later, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife wetlands inventory credited us with approximately 15 square miles, of which one-fifth was rapidly losing its value for wildlife.

This rapid destruction of these very valuable wildlife areas is due in great part to the practice of filling them in with the spoil from harbor and river dredging. Their proximity to the dredging operations and the opinions of the misinformed that marshes are "wastelands," make a combination that is deadly. Only the objection of town planners to unnecessary filling can stop this marsh destruction.

Should our unconcern continue, we will destroy a resource that should be zealously protected for our own welfare and enjoyment and that of future generations. Some of our best wildlife habitat will be gone, and at least one bird, the Clapper Rail, could well be the first species to become extinct in Con-

See "Tidal Marshes"—Page 4

How You Can Help Your Membership Committee

As this issue of Pequot Trails goes in the mails, your Membership Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Malcolm MacGregor, is launching a drive to enroll new Sanctuary members. As you know, it is through continued growth that an organization such as ours can expand its facilities and program to reach more and more people. You can help your committee by endeavoring to enroll at least one new member.

Enclosed with this bulletin you will find a copy of our revised pamphlet listing the Sanctuary's personnel, telling of our activities, and including a membership application. We are asking each member to read this pamphlet and then use it to secure a new member. Just think of the boost that our membership would get if every member would do this! We are counting on you to help us with this appeal!

You will recall that it was voted at the last annual meeting to increase Regular Membership to \$5.00 annually, effective as of June 30, 1956. This was found necessary to meet an increasing budget. However, the memberships you are now soliciting will not expire until June 30, 1957. New members may get as much as three extra months for their first year's dues.

Won't you take this opportunity to give your committee and your Sanctuary a boost? We are counting on you!

Things You May Not Know

The eyes of the Crayfish (fresh-water cousin of the Lobster) is composed of a great number of individual simple eyes, all compounded into one compact structure.

* * *

Unlike Brown Pelicans, White Pelicans never dive for food. They scoop fish from shallow water.

* * *

The muskrat is not a rat. He is an amphibious rodent and should be called a "musquash."

* * *

The "seal" coat which Milady so proudly wears doesn't come from a seal at all. It comes from a fur-bearing sea lion. There are no fur-bearing seals.

* * *

The "song" of the tiny cricket, an insect which is less than an inch long, can sometimes be heard as far as a mile. Mister Cricket is the only one who "sings a song" Mrs. Cricket makes no sound at all.

* * *

Bats have the finest of all fur and the greatest number of hairs per square inch of all animals.

* * *

The Alaskan brown bear is the size of a rat at birth. Cubs usually are born while the mother is denned up for the winter and often she does not even waken.

* * *

The African ostrich is the largest living bird on the earth today, males sometimes reaching a height of eight feet.

* * *

The eyes of the Cottontail Rabbit are placed almost directly opposite one another on the sides of the head. This positioning of the eyes gives the rabbit an extremely wide circle of vision.

* * *

After hopping off, fleas turn and travel tail first through the air.

Book Review

The Hunting Wasp

by John Crompton

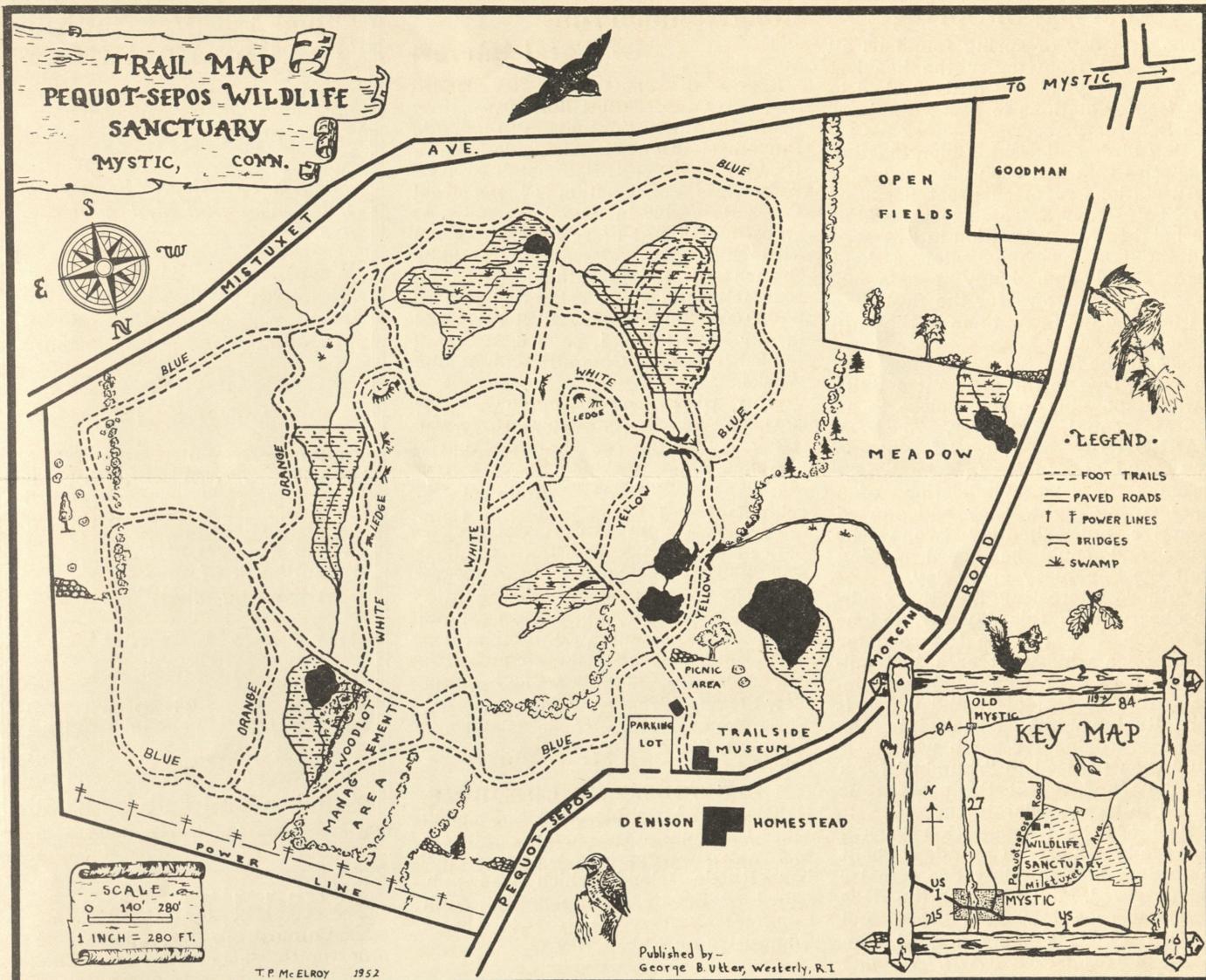
Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston

If this book had been given a different title it might have been mistaken for a shocker or "whodunit." It has the same element of suspense with macabre overtones. But, of course, the author is a scientist; his facts are scrupulous; he simply proves once more that truth is far stranger than fiction.

Sure to be read from cover to cover; may induce nightmares in the suggestible; certainly no reader will ever again complain: "I just can't get interested in insects."

This book is available at the Westerly Library where reader reports have been 100 per cent enthusiastic.

Adele Erisman



Sanctuary's Water Areas

The map above shows the Sanctuary's existing water areas in solid black and its potential water areas in broken lines and dots. This map and articles are presented with the hope that they will make our membership aware of the water development possibilities on our Sanctuary property.

You will note the small amount of black compared to the shaded areas. Most of our water areas are quite small and unattractive to water birds. Our new pond in the meadow, of course, is an exception. Its development has proven most attractive to waterfowl and shore birds. The capabilities of our property to attract and protect wildlife would be greatly increased with the development of some or all of these potential areas. However, financial restrictions have kept us from doing so. Two or three of the areas could be developed quite economically requiring little more than the raising of existing dams and

the inclusion of spillways. Other sections would have to be considered on a long term basis with plans for more sizeable expenditures.

What would be the specific advantages to the Sanctuary if these water areas were developed? This is a logical question that should perhaps be answered at this time. The first result would be more available water for migrating and nesting waterfowl. As you know, the Sanctuary is located within the Atlantic flyway. Each spring and fall finds great numbers of ducks, geese, and other water birds passing over our property. If our water areas were larger, many more of these would stop to feed, rest, and rear young. The flooding of certain sections would kill some trees. From the viewpoint of wildlife, this would be an advantage. Over a long period of time the flooded areas would be effortlessly cleaned. In the meantime, the dead trees would provide

homes for woodpeckers, wood ducks, and other birds. Raccoons and squirrels would be able to find homes in some of them. More water would attract more frogs, minnows, aquatic insects, etc., providing food for herons and smaller water birds. An increased supply of water would be available for all wildlife.

In summation, the development of these water areas would greatly enhance the Sanctuary's wildlife value. It would be possible for visiting groups to see increased abundance of wildlife and at the same time learn the processes for their own property development, thus increasing the Sanctuary's conservation objectives many fold. These objectives can be met only through the increased interest, effort, and support of our membership. Keep the above map and use it to spot the areas described the next time you tour the Sanctuary trails. We think you will agree that these are worthy objectives.

First Day of Spring

The first day of spring found us all digging out from under the heaviest snow of the year and birds flocked to our feeding stations in great numbers. The Sanctuary received many calls reporting birds and seeking identification of species that had been observed.

All stations reported great flocks of FOX SPARROWS. This species was at the height of its migration in this area and the two successive storms kept them snowbound. Many people observed fox sparrows for the first time and many others saw them in the largest flocks ever.

Here at the Sanctuary, the story was the same. Due to the constant activity it was impossible to come close to an accurate count. However, 75 FOX SPARROWS were observed feeding on the ground at one time. Even before the snow there were indications of a heavy spring flight. They had started to arrive approximately two weeks earlier and could be heard singing about the Sanctuary every day.

Another interesting Sanctuary visitor observed on this day was a lone WOODCOCK that chose to probe for worms on a windswept area just outside the back door. One could stand inside within 15 feet of it and watch it probe its long, hinged beak into the ground searching for earth worms. It would then proceed to "rhumba" for a few steps and repeat the process. It seemed to have moderate success.

A flock of about 50 male RED WINGS spent the better part of four days about the feeding station. Only two females were observed. Mixed in with the RED WINGS were a few COWBIRDS and GRACKLES. This being a good winter for TREE SPARROWS, we had more of them than usual. The two male TOWHEES that spent the winter here were constant visitors. EVENING GROSBEAKS were noticed occasionally but not in the large flocks that had been so frequent earlier. Many SONG SPARROWS were about and could be heard singing despite the snow.

In addition to the above we had our usual number of WHITE THROATS, JUNCOS, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES, CHICKADEES, PURPLE FINCHES, DOWNTY and HAIRY WOODPECKERS.

The jumping mouse is only about three inches long in body, yet it can jump from 8 to 10 feet.

* * *

The sloth, one of the slowest of all animals, eats so slowly that before he has finished one meal, it is time for the next.

* * *

A starfish will eat more than 8 oysters in a day.

Congressional Bills Of Local Interest

S.2860—CONNECTICUT RIVER BASIN FLOOD PROJECTS. Senators Prescott Bush (Conn.), William A. Purtell (Conn.), H. Alexander Smith (N.J.), and Leverett Saltonstall (Mass.) Authorizes construction of the Cold River Reservoir in New Hampshire at an estimated cost of \$7,273,000, and the Littleville Reservoir on the Middle Branch of the Westfield River in Massachusetts at an estimated cost of \$4,030,000. Same as H.R.8121 described in our Report No. 1, page 6. Referred 1/5/56 to Senate Committee on Public Works.

H. J. RES. 468—NORTHEASTERN WATERSHED AND FLOOD PROTECTION COMMISSION. Mr. Harold D. Donohue (Mass.) Establishes a northeastern United States Watershed Development and Flood Protection Commission composed of twelve members, four to be appointed by the President, four by the President of the Senate, and four by the Speaker of the House. The Commission would study land and water management problems in the northeastern area, including Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. Same as H. J. Res. 459, described in our Report No. 1, page 6.

H. RES. 360—WICKFORD HARBOR, RHODE ISLAND. Mr. John E. Fogarty (R. I.) Requests the Army Engineers to review the report on Wickford Harbor, Rhode Island, which was published as Senate Document 141, 79th Congress. Referred 1/9/56 to House Committee on Public Works.

Plants Available From Sanctuary

The Sanctuary has an excessive number of a few species of plants. We are making these plants available to our members—free for the digging. These plants were the beginning of what we hoped would be a permanent Sanctuary nursery. However, this idea had to be abandoned due to the lack of cultivating machinery necessary for proper care. If you can use these plants for attracting birds or for other conservation purposes, we suggest that you pick them up sometime this month.

Plants available are: Amur River Privet, Toringo crabapple, autumn olive and a few evergreens including spruce, larch, and white pine. All plants are three or four years old. The autumn olive, crabapple, and privet are excellent food plants for birds. The evergreens are small but healthy. Why not take advantage of this opportunity to make your property more attractive to wildlife.

Trading Post Items

We have a new selection of BIRD HOUSES

These are rustic, well-constructed houses that birds will use.

Wrens	\$1.00 to \$4.00
Bluebirds	\$2.20 to \$4.00
Tree Swallows	\$2.20 to \$4.00
Flickers	\$6.00

SPECIAL SALE ON STOCK ITEMS

Sanctuary Seed

Mixture	20% off
Suet Cakes	25% off
Most Feeders	20% off
A Few Feeders at	50% off
"Handbook of Attracting Birds"	\$2.00

GIFT AND PERSONAL ITEMS

Stationery	\$1.00 to \$2.50
Note Paper	\$1.00
Party Matches	\$1.00
Place Mats	\$1.00
Audubon Bird Calls	\$1.50

Tidal Marshes

(Continued from Page Two)

necticut since the last Wild Turkey was shot in 1913.

Very important hunting areas would be gone, for it is in these tidal marshes that Connecticut hunters harvest their share of the Atlantic Flyway ducks and the ducks produced in our own inland areas.

Tidal marshes also are important to Blue Crab populations. Thousands of bushels of crabs are harvested annually by Connecticut residents. Then, too, with the loss of our tidal marshes, a number of plants will almost certainly be eliminated from the Connecticut picture.

No justification can be found for the use of lands for **any** purpose if it will eliminate within the state a unique habitat. What makes the Connecticut situation serious is that this habitat is being destroyed, for the most part, unnecessarily.

(Available on request from Conn. State Board of Fisheries and Game, Hartford—mimeographed leaflet "The Tidal Marsh and Soil Disposal.")